

GOWGANDA

Gowganda progresses in spite of many difficulties. In our special correspondence this week will be found several items of interest concerning this silver district. For numerous reasons Gowganda has not had a fair chance to make good. Chief among these is lack of transportation facilities, and it is unfortunate that the Gowganda road is still in such bad condition in spite of the urgent necessity of improvement.

LABOUR ORGANIZATION IN CANADA

Membership in the labour unions is growing. The annual report of the Department of Labour, recently issued, shows that there was an increase last year from 133,132 to 160,120. This is equivalent to about two per cent. of the population.

The Department estimates the number of wage-earners in Canada at 1,300,000. About one-eighth are members of unions.

Nearly the whole membership is in organizations, which have their headquarters in the United States, and most of which are in affiliation with the American Federation of Labour. The latter organization is the most important of its character in North America, and has a membership of about 2,000,000.

Organization has proven a great boon to wage-earners in Canada. At the annual Trades Congresses vital subjects are discussed. Deputations place the resolutions before the Dominion and Provincial Governments and urge action. The serious deliberations of the Trades Congresses command attention and respect and organized labour gains influence thereby.

The two miners' unions which are affiliated with the American Federation of Labour are the United Mine Workers of America, and the Western Federation of Miners. Both these organizations are now conducting strikes characterized by lawlessness, by violence and intimidation. The miners would do well to use other means to gain their ends. They could take a lesson from the workers in some of the other industries.

At the beginning of the year the United Mine Workers had a membership of 5,631 in Canada, and 381,334 elsewhere, and the Western Federation had a membership of 5,947 in Canada, and 55,000 elsewhere.

THE GRIEVANCE PROBLEM

It is often contended by miners, as by those engaged in other industries, that adequate provision is seldom made for the airing of grievances. The complaint is made that an employee who goes to the manager to register a complaint, thereby incurs the ill-will of his employers and makes his position worse instead of better. Some employees state that as a result of going to the manager they become immediately subject to the displeasure of the under bosses and suffer accordingly.

There can be little doubt that an opportunity for easy access to those in authority would establish better relations. Grievances aired become less intolerable. Many are imaginary, being based upon incomplete knowledge

of the facts and unfair comparisons. Some are real and can be removed only when fully understood by both parties.

In the recent investigation of the strike of miners in the Michigan copper district, the Copper Country Commercial Club found that most of the contentions of the strikers were ill-advised. The officers of the Western Federation showed much anxiety over recognition of themselves as representatives of the miners; but failed to present the investigating committee with any statement of the grievances of the copper miners. The committee, after investigation, however, came to the conclusion that the miners have no suitable means of lodging complaints, and they have recommended that each manager set aside a day or half-day of each week for the express purpose of hearing grievances of employees, that he investigate every complaint, and adjust every legitimate grievance with all possible speed, and see that no man is discriminated against because of presenting complaints.

It seems necessary to reassure the employees that they will be given a proper hearing and that everything reasonable will be done to adjust real or dispel imaginary grievances.

The companies will do well to consider the recommendations favourably.

WESTERN FEDERATION METHODS

In an attempt to settle the strike of Michigan copper miners, the Copper Country Commercial Club appointed a committee to investigate the subject from all sides and make a report to Governor W. N. Ferris. The mining companies assisted this committee in every possible way and allowed free access to all the data bearing on the subject. From the investigation a voluminous report has been made.

The officers of the Western Federation were asked to present to the committee their side of the case. The vice-president of the Federation, who has been in Calumet in charge of the strike since its inception, was asked to present all the facts and grievances and demands upon which were based the calling of the strike. Later a second invitation was personally extended to Mr. Mahoney to furnish to the committee the above data and a statement of conditions in the copper country which the Western Federation of Miners was seeking to better. The committee reports that this information has not been furnished.

As the strikers have been now out of work for three months it is evident that they must soon find employment. The avowed purpose of the committee was to locate the trouble and endeavour to remove it. The action of the union officers has made this difficult. It has, however, made more clear the impression that the strike was not called so much for the benefit of copper country miners as for the organization which a number of them have been induced to join.

THE NANAIMO STRIKE

Published accounts of the report of Mr. Samuel Price, K.C., on the U. M. W. A. coal miners' strike on Van-